

How WFWP's Bridge of Peace Began

Nora Spurgin

November 30, 2015

Transcribed by Emily Cornier



I'd like to say good evening to all of you as peace-makers. "Blessed be the peace-makers;" so you are all blessed. I wanted to start out by saying that last evening while I was sitting here (at the WFWP USA Assembly), and I was looking at the graphics, I was struck by the symbolic content of the emblem, it's so simple but if you look at it you see the suggestion of doves which means peace. You can sense a spiritual flow and you also see movement. And, as I thought about it, I realized it means the spiritual flow toward peace. Isn't that nice? But it is so simple and so beautiful. And that's what we're all about.

I'm going to mention a couple of historic things first, then I want to share some more meaningful deeper content with you this evening. First of all in terms of history, the Japanese and Koreans started friendship ceremonies before the Japanese ladies came to the US. They had a kind of ceremony called the sisterhood ceremony. It was not a bridge ceremony. But that was the beginning of the idea of women getting together and reconciling some of the deep hurts and the trauma of our history.

So they met in Korea and had many deep, meaningful, and tearful experiences together. As a result of that, our founders, Dr. and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon, decided that we should do this in America especially after the 50th anniversary of World War 2. They suggested that Japanese ladies come here and have a reconciliation ceremony here in the US. So, in preparation for that, we got together and we were trying to plan "what should we do here?" And we felt like we wanted to do something that was deeply meaningful. We talked about using a bridge because it symbolizes two sides coming together. Then we thought let's put an opening in the center and have people cross the bridge and come down in the center. As we planned that, it became very clear what we were going to do.

I want to talk a little bit about the symbol of the bridge. If you think about when you start to walk on the bridge, you are actually bringing your whole ancestry around you. So as people walked the bridge they were walking the journey of their life together with their ancestry. It was like bringing everything with them when they walked this bridge. And then when they got closer to the person they were going to embrace they bowed to each other. That bow represented their humility and their repentance for what they had done wrong to create problems, to create hostilities. It also meant receiving the forgiveness from the other side and forgiving the other side. So there was a deep feeling of repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation in that bow.

Then there is the wonderful meeting with each other, kind of running into each other's arms and embracing each other. And in that embrace I felt like when two people unite there is power. There's a different kind of power when two people unite, right? Alone you can pray and you feel God's power. But when you unite with someone else, there's a tremendous flow that takes place.

Let's talk about flow, the flow that takes place. I think the feminine spirit of God just comes through and can create deep deep tearful meaning to each person. So there were many tears left on the bridge because many people felt that they left their burden behind and that they came out in front as a new person. And you can see how they all raise their arms up; they raise their arms as a new person and make a commitment to be the change they want to see in the world.

So to me there's a whole lifetime of experiences in that walk; and there's a lifetime of pain and hurt, of forgiveness and commitment to a new life. We had so many deep experiences and so many tears were shed, so much joy and laughter were done on that bridge.

I want to tell you what kind of bridges we have done for international unity. We held bridges between Japanese and Americans and the Bridge of Peace became a signature piece, and we went all over the world. All over the world different nations got together and held Bridge of Peace ceremonies. We realized that this is a powerful thing. This bridge is so powerful, let's use it for other hurts as well. So what problem do we have in America? We have interracial problems. So then we created an interracial bridge of peace. So we went around the country, and we had many interracial groups walking together. Of course there were many black and white but other racial groups went across that bridge as well.

And then what other groups have problems? There are religious problems. I think one of the most powerful bridge walks happened in Israel. A group of 500 women went to Israel for WFWP. We had a conference there and we did a bridge ceremony there. At that ceremony there were Palestinian women and Israeli women and we had a Bridge of Peace kind of like this. It was on a stage, and there were couples that were planned who would go across. As we came to an end, an Israeli woman jumped up and said, "I want to cross that bridge with a Palestinian women!" And so she grabbed someone and they came and crossed the bridge.

But that wasn't all, heaven broke loose and suddenly spontaneously people were jumping up all over the audience, jumping up and bringing people to cross the bridge together. They stayed up past midnight. Around one o'clock in the morning people were still crossing the bridge until everyone in the audience had crossed the bridge. It was a most powerful experience.

We have other areas of reconciliations too. There are family problems. We have invited husbands and wives who cross the bridge. We have had inter-generational bridge crossings where teenagers and their parents cross the bridge. And not only that, WFWP chapters did some in homes for the elderly where they had some elders crossing the bridge.

Also there is one other group and that is our ancestors. So we wanted to address the ancestor problems, and we had bridge crossing with Native Americans. We had very deep and very powerful experiences with that. You can see that the bridge has gained its own momentum and power. I feel that any person that crosses the bridge adds an additional element of power to that experience.

I'm going to tell you a couple of stories and then I'll end because I know we have many other things to do tonight. The first story I want to tell you I call the "handkerchief story." This happened during the time the Japanese ladies were coming here and crossed with American ladies. One pair was crying. The Japanese lady had a handkerchief, and the American lady did not have one. So the Japanese lady gave her handkerchief to her "sister" because she was crying. So she was wiping her tears, and then the other one needed it, so she passed it back, and so they shared their handkerchief.

At the end of the program the Japanese lady said to the American lady, "Why don't you take this. Our tears are together in this handkerchief." So she took it home and said "What do I do with this handkerchief? I can't launder it because our tears are together in this handkerchief." So she cut the handkerchief in half, went out and bought two picture frames, and framed each half. She sent one frame to Japan to her sister, and kept the other frame. Isn't that a beautiful story?

I have three stories to tell. The second one was told several times already. I was going to mention something about former President George Bush. I will just say that, as you have heard, Mrs. Barbara Bush went across the bridge many times, and George Bush came and spoke. The first time Barbara was going across the bridge, her husband had tears in his eyes, and he said to me (I was sitting beside him), he said, "If we could have done this 50 years ago, maybe we could have prevented a war." It moved him that much.

And it makes me think "What kind of wars are we preventing right now? We will never know what kind of wars we are preventing." So let us think like that, moving forward, what can we prevent by actually reconciling, by coming out of the Bridge experience as new people who are ready to work for reconciliation throughout the world.

Story number three is actually the story of Israel, which I already shared. So to conclude, I just want to say, I believe the power of the bridge draws down upon us our Mother God's energy; and we become channels for that energy. So I really think that we all are channels, and if we can think like this, "I am a channel for God's energy, for God's feminine energy;" there's no end to what we can do. Because we are not just limited to our own power, but we have God's power pouring through us. So let this ceremony heal you. Let this ceremony inspire you to go forward with healing and love.

Thank you.